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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and rehabilitation in Tajikistan

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 53/1 K of 7 December 1998, entitled "Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and rehabilitation in Tajikistan". In that resolution, the Assembly, welcoming the progress made towards the implementation of the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan (A/52/219-S/1997/510, annex I), and noting that the economic situation in Tajikistan remained bleak, constraining the efforts of the Government to support the vulnerable population, including returning refugees and displaced persons, and that the country remained in dire need of humanitarian, rehabilitation and development assistance, strongly condemned the murder of four members of the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT), and urged the parties to ensure the safety, security and freedom of movement of United Nations and other international humanitarian personnel, as well as the safety and security of their premises.

2. The General Assembly also encouraged Member States and others concerned to continue assistance to alleviate the urgent humanitarian needs of Tajikistan and to offer support to Tajikistan for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of its economy; welcomed the intention of the Secretary-General to continue the United Nations humanitarian programme in Tajikistan by issuing a consolidated inter-agency appeal for humanitarian assistance to Tajikistan for 1999, and invited Member States to fund programmes included in the appeal.

3. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to monitor the humanitarian situation in Tajikistan and to report to it at its fifty-fourth session on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution. The present report covers the period from the adoption of the resolution to mid-July 1999. During that period, three reports were submitted to the Security Council on the situation in Tajikistan (S/1998/1029, S/1999/124 and S/1999/514).

II. Current situation in Tajikistan

4. Although full implementation of the 1997 General Agreement is more than eight months behind schedule, notable progress in the peace process was made in the second quarter of 1999 when a number of outstanding problems were finally resolved. Those breakthroughs followed a tense three-month period, from April to June 1999, when relations between the Government and United Tajik Opposition (UTO) stalemated over failure to reach agreement on constitutional reform, amnesty for former combatants and power-sharing issues. On 17 June, the President of Tajikistan and the leader of the UTO signed a Protocol outlining the concrete steps both parties would take to speed implementation.

5. Despite an overall lessening of tensions, the security situation remains volatile. In late 1998, in accordance with provisions of the General Agreement, several unaffiliated armed groups were disbanded, a development that helped to reduce tensions. In areas where command structures were fragmented, however, armed clashes continued to occur. Political killings, including the September murder of a leading member of the UTO, Otakhon Latifi, also persisted. In October, hostilities erupted in the previously quiet area of Khujand in Leninabad, increasing tensions with neighbouring Uzbekistan, which was accused of serving as the staging ground for the attack. In December 1998, fighting erupted in Dushanbe between rival units, raising concerns about the ability of the Tajik authorities to maintain law and order. The killing of four UNMOT personnel in July 1998 in the Karategin Valley followed by the death of a fifth UNMOT staff member in unclear circumstances in August led to a temporary evacuation of non-essential United Nations personnel and tighter security procedures, including restrictions on travel in the Karategin Valley. Although three gunmen were found guilty in March 1999 of the July UNMOT killings, restrictions on United Nations travel were lifted only in mid-June.

6. The Government has continued its successful implementation of structural economic reforms, resulting in a 5.3 per cent growth rate in 1998 and a projected rate for 1999 of 5.6 per cent. Despite most economic indicators showing positive improvement, foreign investment remains low, impeding further growth. Of particular concern to the humanitarian community is the fact that economic reform is so far doing little to improve living conditions. According to the World Bank, 85 per cent of all Tajiks continue to live below the poverty line, including 5 per cent who are completely destitute and 12 per cent who fall into the category of the extremely poor. The dramatic decline in the level of remittances following the August 1998 crisis of the Russian economy has created further hardship and destitution. The loss of remittances combined with deteriorating terms of trade for Tajikistan's principal exports, cotton and aluminium, increases the Government's need for external financing. International funding for humanitarian operations is particularly important since such operations remain the principal means by which hundreds of thousands of Tajiks meet their basic needs.

III. Humanitarian operations

A. General

7. The main aim of United Nations humanitarian operations in Tajikistan is to support the country's two-year peace process through a three-pronged strategy designed to meet the basic needs of at-risk populations during the critical post-conflict period. During the past 12 months, agencies have continued to implement three types of projects: life-saving interventions, programmes aimed at stabilizing at-risk populations and projects designed to facilitate the reintegration of demobilized combatants. The United Nations humanitarian operations in Tajikistan are based on the rationale that relief assistance is essential for preventing large segments of the Tajik population from becoming further marginalized. Agencies recognize their responsibility for mitigating the effects of destitution among key social groups in order to avoid the kind of social unrest that might undermine the peace process.

8. It was hoped at the end of the last reporting period that humanitarian conditions in Tajikistan were improving. Unfortunately, standards of living have continued to decline, with unemployment now estimated at 30 per cent. Reductions in social expenditure have left widows, pensioners and other vulnerable groups with insufficient income to meet basic survival needs. Cases of families surviving on one meal every two days are rising, in particular in urban areas, where coping mechanisms are limited by unemployment and collapsing social safety nets. Ongoing transformations in the agricultural sector, including privatization, have rendered large segments of the rural population food-insecure. Although coping strategies are more diverse in rural areas, restructuring has forced farmers throughout the country into sharecropping arrangements, undermining efforts to achieve long-term self-sufficiency. Production levels remain low, especially in cereals, where yields are expected to be 15 per cent lower than last year owing to a shortage of inputs and epidemics of rust.

9. Health care remains substandard throughout the country, despite ongoing efforts to rehabilitate facilities and provide essential drugs. In rural areas, many health workers have been without payment for several months. Health professionals are seriously concerned that over-reliance on antibiotics is producing resistance to a number of contagious diseases and raises the possibility of major, uncontrollable epidemics, in particular tuberculosis and malaria. Outbreaks of water-borne diseases, including typhoid fever, continue to occur in areas with non-functioning water systems.

10. Although virtually all segments of the Tajik population, with the exception of the wealthiest, required some form of assistance during the reporting period, humanitarian needs were greatest in war-affected areas. As in previous years, the majority of programmes were concentrated in the Khatlon and Gorniy Badakshan regions, both heavily damaged during the civil war. Interventions were also conducted in areas with large concentrations of returnees, in particular in parts of Khatlon and districts around Dushanbe. The outbreak of hostilities in Leninabad Province in late October 1998 resulted in the closure of the border with Uzbekistan, forcing a dramatic increase in food prices and pushing thousands of people into food insecurity. Although a number of agencies, including the World Food Programme (WFP), launched emergency interventions, coverage in northern districts remained limited at the end of the period. Following the killing of the UNMOT personnel in the Karategin Valley in July 1998 and the withdrawal of humanitarian staff, programmes in that key region were either halted or significantly reduced. Surveys conducted after the lifting of travel restrictions in mid-June 1999 showed that serious humanitarian conditions, including hunger and ill health, existed throughout the Valley. Under the leadership of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, humanitarian agencies will be conducting a multisectoral, inter-agency technical assessment in August 1999 aimed at determining the level of need and developing a plan of action to address the most pressing humanitarian problems.

11. Despite the importance of humanitarian operations for contributing to peace and stability, donor response to both the 1998 and 1999 consolidated inter-agency appeals has been disappointing. Only 28 per cent of the 1998 Appeal for $34,640,614 was funded. Owing largely to a streamlined set of priorities, donors have responded more favourably to the 1999 appeal, pledging approximately 40 per cent of requirements by mid-June 1999. Although the improvement in donor response is welcome, United Nations agencies are concerned that of the 19 programmes for which funds were requested in the 1999 appeal, only refugee operations and ex-combatant reintegration have received adequate funding. Life-saving interventions and social support programmes remain seriously underfunded, putting hundreds of thousands of Tajiks at risk of malnutrition, epidemics and loss of livelihood.

12. Of particular concern is the lack of support for food assistance and health programmes, which aim to save lives and must receive immediate funding if social catastrophe is to be avoided in Tajikistan. In order to ensure basic humanitarian coverage for the last six months of 1999,

United Nations agencies have requested $13,510,348 for 10 priority programmes in the mid-year review of the appeal, launched in late July 1999. Tajikistan's prioritized list includes two new projects designed to facilitate the rapid demobilization of combatants.

13. Although humanitarian agencies devote the majority of their resources to life-saving and stabilization programmes in areas where conditions are stable, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations continue to support rehabilitation projects aimed at revitalizing communities and promoting self-sufficiency. In the Khatlon and Dushanbe regions, hundreds of public buildings, hospitals, clinics, schools, irrigation and electricity systems and bridges have been repaired. The United Nations large-scale shelter reconstruction programme, which has provided roofs and homes for more than 20,000 returnees during the past three years, is nearing completion, although substantial repairs are still required in the Karategin Valley, where 40 per cent of homes in certain districts remain uninhabitable.

14. Humanitarian operations in Tajikistan continue to be coordinated under the leadership of the Humanitarian Coordinator with the assistance of the Field Coordination Unit of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The Humanitarian Coordinator remains responsible for the overall direction of the humanitarian programme, including policy formulation on the key issues of security, the link between emergency aid, rehabilitation and reconstruction and resource mobilization. The Humanitarian Coordinator is also responsible for ensuring that the emergency programmes of United Nations agencies complement efforts undertaken by UNMOT, the Bretton Woods institutions and other international lending institutions. Particular attention continues to be given to ensuring a principled approach to humanitarian operations among all agencies. Programme coordination for each sector remains the responsibility of competent United Nations agencies.

B. Security developments affecting humanitarian relief efforts

15. Volatile security conditions in the Karategin Valley have made it difficult for agencies to reach vulnerable populations in that hard-hit region. The killing of four UNMOT personnel in July 1998 near Labijar led to the temporary evacuation of non-essential United Nations personnel to Tashkent, and travel by United Nations staff in the Karategin Valley was restricted. Non-governmental organizations also withdrew their international staff, returning to the area only after an inter-agency humanitarian assessment in October 1998. Although United Nations staff were prevented from working in the Valley until the situation improved and restrictions could be lifted in mid-June 1999, non-governmental organizations continued to provide elements of a basic safety net, helping to prevent a humanitarian disaster. At the end of the reporting period, the Karategin Valley was accessible to humanitarian personnel with the exception of the south-western corner, which remained off-limits.

16. Most of the non-governmental organizations working in the Karategin Valley continue to avoid using the main highway linking the region to Dushanbe. Large stretches of the road remain outside the control of responsible authorities. In late March 1999, staff from an international non-governmental organization using the road were stopped by armed gunmen who threatened to kill all international personnel entering the area.

17. The shooting of a German Agro Action staff member in December 1998 in the Zerahshan Valley near Khujand in the Leninabad region led to the adoption of tighter security measures on road convoys organized by non-governmental organizations.

C. Non-governmental organizations

18. More than 40 international and approximately 50 national non-governmental organizations currently provide some type of humanitarian assistance in Tajikistan. International non-governmental organizations and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) together received more than $28 million during 1998, compared with less than $10 million received by United Nations agencies. Non-governmental organizations are active in all humanitarian sectors, although the bulk of funds are concentrated on food assistance and health programmes. As in previous years, non-governmental organization operations are based on both a geographical as well as a sectoral division of labour, helping to prevent duplication. Coordination is facilitated through sectoral committees covering food assistance, health, agriculture, human rights and security. In addition, the NGO Forum under the leadership of an elected chairperson, continues to serve as the main focal point for policy formulation.

19. During the first half of 1999, international non-governmental organizations began experiencing serious restrictions in their operational environment. These included demands for tax payments, despite their tax-free status; the introduction of fees for registration of communications

equipment; delays in granting customs clearance for humanitarian materials and licences for the distribution of certain medicines; and increasingly long waits to secure visas. Non-governmental organizations responded to those restrictions by addressing them on a case-to-case basis and seeking the intervention of the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator and funding agencies.

20. Although international non-governmental organizations received the majority of international funds earmarked for humanitarian assistance, a number of agencies were forced either to close or to shorten projects. With the majority of funding aimed at food assistance and health programmes, non-governmental organizations had difficulty in securing financing for important projects in agriculture and water and sanitation. Limited funding for humanitarian programmes in Tajikistan is expected to lead to increased rationalization among non-governmental organizations during the coming year.

D. Relief food assistance

21. Economic hardship combined with a reduced harvest in key agricultural areas have made many segments of the population food insecure. Pockets of hunger exist throughout the country, in particular in war-affected areas, where a high percentage of households are headed by women. In a disturbing new trend, loss of remittances from male relatives working in the Russian Federation has forced numerous families across the threshold into food deficit. During the second half of 1998, poor and late harvests in the Karategin Valley and Gorniy-Badakshan stretched coping mechanisms and put thousands of Tajiks at risk of food shortages during the hunger gap between July and September. A similar phenomenon is expected in key areas during the second half of 1999. Shortages are also expected in Leninabad, where closure of the border with Uzbekistan from early November 1998 to June 1999 raised the price of grain exponentially, forcing thousands into emergency feeding programmes.

22. As in previous years, Tajikistan has been unable to produce sufficient cereals to feed its population. The deficit for the reporting period, estimated at 420,000 tons, was met through a combination of imports and humanitarian assistance. However, the total amount of humanitarian assistance did not exceed 100,000 tons, leaving approximately 320,000 tons to be found through private channels. In the absence of an import policy and a properly functioning market, cereal prices fluctuated throughout the period. By early July 1999, wheat prices had increased by more than 50 per cent over the previous year, making it difficult for impoverished families to meet daily requirements through market purchases. The number of families forced to consume only one meal every two days rose significantly during the first quarters of 1999, in particular in urban areas, where households had only limited access to alternative sources of food.

23. Food agencies, under the leadership of WFP, continued to target vulnerable population groups, providing direct assistance to war widows, single-headed households, pensioners, orphans, the disabled, the destitute, returnees and internally displaced persons. More than 1.4 million persons, approximately 24 per cent of the population, were targeted for food assistance during the reporting period, including 468,000 beneficiaries who received 30,000 tons of food support from WFP. Following the outbreak of hostilities in Leninabad, WFP opened emergency feeding programmes in the region for the first time. Although the total number of beneficiaries receiving WFP food aid dropped, the amount of food provided to recipients increased owing to reapportionment of the aid basket. Altogether, 10 agencies provided food assistance during the period to at-risk beneficiaries throughout the country. As in previous years, individual agencies took responsibility for ensuring adequate coverage in particular regions. The division of labour reduced duplication and maximized the impact of donor funding.

24. During the first three months of 1999, WFP received inadequate financial support and was forced to suspend vulnerable feeding programmes in most southern regions until April. Although programmes were re-established, WFP's funding situation remained precarious and a breakdown in its pipeline occurred. By early July, emergency food supplies were almost exhausted and WFP was faced with the prospect of once again halting its vulnerable feeding programmes. WFP reported that approximately 370,000 at-risk beneficiaries would be without food support until the agency was able to re-establish its pipeline by borrowing supplies from other WFP programmes. As a result of recent donor pledges, food supplies are due to arrive in Tajikistan during August and September 1999.

25. As part of ongoing efforts to improve food security through productive activity, WFP and other agencies continued to implement food-for-work schemes for able-bodied beneficiaries. More than 16,000 people, of whom 75 per cent were women, participated in the innovative WFP land-lease programme, whereby beneficiaries are provided with food, enabling them to cultivate land newly leased from local authorities. WFP also supported rehabilitation, training

and income-generation projects through its food-for-work programme.

26. Emergency food aid programmes were phased down in a number of areas during the first half of 1999, although the re-emergence of hunger in certain locations forced agencies to improve targeting to ensure that the most vulnerable persons continue to receive appropriate support. The aim of the phase-down, after four years of direct food aid, is to transfer able-bodied beneficiaries into food-for-work schemes and other productive activities. It is expected that by the end of 1999 more than 300,000 persons throughout the country, including 120,000 served by WFP, will be taken off emergency food aid.

27. Agencies recognized that during the transition away from emergency assistance mechanisms needed to be adopted aimed at protecting the most needy from further suffering. As part of ongoing efforts to strengthen targeting, WFP initiated a vulnerability analysis and mapping programme in May 1999 aimed at developing a countrywide profile of vulnerability. During the next 12 months, the WFP team will collate and analyse data on a wide range of social indicators, producing a vulnerability profile for each of the regions where humanitarian agencies work. The profile will help agencies to identify the most at-risk populations and to take steps to ensure that adequate food assistance reaches them in a timely fashion.

E. Agricultural support

28. Cereal production during 1998 was lower than expected, owing to a severe winter and delayed spring planting. Although the deficit was met in part through a combination of humanitarian assistance and imports, shortages increased market prices, rendering thousands of Tajiks food-insecure. Officials are predicting that 1999 cereal production will be 15 per cent lower than that of 1998 as a result of inadequate inputs and an increase in the acreage planted with cotton. In addition, outbreaks of rust and smut and infestations of pests are expected to lower yields in key districts, including Khatlon, where 70 per cent of agricultural land is reportedly affected. The downward trend in agricultural output, evident since the outbreak of the civil war, continued during the reporting period, in particular in livestock, where production plummeted to 43 per cent lower than the 1992 baseline.

29. As part of ongoing efforts to restructure the agricultural sector, authorities have announced that 160 collective farms will be privatized during the next 18 months. Although land titles continued to be transferred during the period, the impact of privatization has been limited because of insecurity of land tenure. In addition, most private farmers receive virtually no financial or technical support. In a disturbing trend, sharecropping continues to spread in areas undergoing restructuring: farmers unable to procure inputs are being forced to borrow from large owners in return for a percentage of their crop. Officials report that more than 75 per cent of farmers are now destitute, unable to support their families through their own production.

30. Humanitarian agencies continue to support destitute farmers with seeds and tools. The WFP land-lease programme targets farmers on newly acquired land, supplying food aid for households with inadequate incomes. In the hard-hit Karategin Valley, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) operates a potato seed project, distributing high-quality seeds, fertilizer and inputs to destitute farmers in the private sector. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) complement the programme by distributing high-quality seeds to other farming constituencies in the Karategin Valley. In Khatlon, FAO supports returnees by providing seeds, fertilizers and hand tools. During the reporting period, seven humanitarian agencies were active in helping to improve agricultural output by providing seeds, tools, pesticides, machinery, food aid and training to farmers throughout the country. Unfortunately, given the 50 per cent of the Tajik population engaged in farm work, funding for agricultural projects remains poor, limiting the international community's ability to have a positive effect on reforms in this key sector.

F. Refugee repatriation and support

31. Since 1993, when the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) began its repatriation programme, more than 50,000 Tajiks from Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and other countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States have returned to their country. In 1996, UNHCR phased down its operations, handing over its protection mandate to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. In the 1997 General Agreement, UNHCR was asked to facilitate the return of ex-combatants and refugees from camps in Afghanistan and surrounding countries. UNHCR resumed field activities, focusing its operations on implementation of the Refugee Protocol in the General Agreement.

32. During the reporting period, 3,785 Tajiks returned to Tajikistan from five countries. By the end of December

1998, UNHCR had completed repatriation of refugees from Afghanistan, reintegrating a total of 39,733 Tajiks between 1993 and 1998. During the first half of 1999, repatriation from other countries proceeded smoothly, although activities for refugees currently in Kyrgyzstan, who are slated for resettlement in the Karategin Valley, were delayed by restrictions on the movement of United Nations personnel imposed as a result of the insecure conditions. The improvement of the situation brought about the lifting of those restrictions in mid-June 1999 and allowed UNHCR to accelerate that part of its programme. Barring unforeseen circumstances, the Agency expects successfully to repatriate its entire annual caseload of 5,000 refugees by the end of December 1999. As in previous periods, UNHCR was assisted with repatriation by other agencies, including the International Organization for Migration, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the State Migration Service.

33. During the second quarter of 1999, UNHCR was informed that approximately 1,600 Uzbeks were congregated in the Hoit and Tajikibad districts of the Karategin Valley. Owing to security restrictions, the Agency was unable to survey the population or to provide emergency assistance. In mid-July, following the lifting of those restrictions, UNHCR, accompanied by staff of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, undertook a mission, assessing humanitarian conditions and conducting preliminary interviews with members of the community. Following the mission, the Agency initiated discussions with the Government of Tajikistan regarding the process that would be used to determine the refugee status of this caseload.

34. UNHCR continued to provide a full integration package for returnees, including shelter and food assistance allocated by WFP. During the reporting period, UNHCR financed the construction of 1,750 shelters for more than 1,900 beneficiaries out of the 2,000 recommended in a 1998 survey. The remaining 250 shelters, which will be constructed by non-governmental organizations, will be completed by the end of 1999. UNHCR continued to support the WFP land-lease programme, which benefited 2,000 returnee households. Working through other agencies, UNHCR also supported the rehabilitation of health, water and educational facilities. In communities where refugees have been resettled for longer periods, UNHCR shifted its focus in early 1999 to micro-enterprise activities in order to increase food security and family income. Given the significant decrease in its caseload, the agency expects to phase down its operations during 2000.

G. Health

35. The health care system in Tajikistan remains in serious crisis. Although humanitarian agencies have continued to rehabilitate hospitals and clinics, virtually no progress has been made in improving case management, promoting health sector reform or updating medical equipment. Funding for health care remains grossly inadequate, with average per capita expenditure having plummeted from $250 in 1990 to approximately $2 in 1999. The loss during the last six years of more than 17 per cent of the country's doctors and 21 per cent of its nurses has caused major staff shortages and led to a lowering of professional standards. Non-payment of salaries remains a major impediment to reform, in particular in hard-hit rural areas where local councils receive little or no financial support from the central Government.

36. Access to medical care is becoming increasingly difficult for the country's impoverished population. Although health care is officially free, informal charges are levied at all stages of the system. Such charges, often equivalent to a monthly wage packet for routine visits, have effectively put adequate care outside the reach of the majority of the population. Simple hospital procedures, for example, a normal childbirth, which costs nearly 30 per cent of the average annual wage, are bankrupting families. Patients who can not afford informal charges are regularly denied medical care.

37. According to official statistics, the health status of the population improved slightly during the reporting period. Maternal and infant mortality rates dropped from 82.3 per 100,000 live births to 65.5 per 100,000 and from 30.4 per 1,000 to 27.6 per 1,000, respectively. Despite those improvements, key segments of the population suffer disproportionately from poor health, women in particular. The number of unsupervised home births has increased to nearly 30 per cent of all births and in certain rural areas to more than 75 per cent. Birth intervals average less than two years for most women and more than 40 per cent of all pregnant women are anaemic. The number of low-birth-weight babies has increased to more than 17 per cent of all live births. Incidents of sexually transmitted disease have also increased, with syphilis prevalence estimated at 16.3 per 100,000, up from 1.6 per 100,000 in 1991. It is estimated that between 40 and 50 per cent of the adult female population may be suffering from some form of sexually transmitted disease.

38. The health status of children is also a matter of serious concern. A recent nutritional study in the Khatlon area, home to large numbers of returnees, showed unacceptably high

levels of stunting, a strong indicator of chronic malnutrition. Drug abuse continues to grow, especially among young adults and the unemployed. Officials estimate that in Dushanbe alone more than 20,000 persons have become addicted to heroin. Despite a 14-fold increase in addiction, attendance at treatment centres remains limited.

39. Of the communicable diseases, tuberculosis, malaria and typhoid fever were the most prevalent during the reporting period. Of particular concern is the apparent rise in cases of drug-resistant tuberculosis as a result of failure to complete expensive courses of treatment. Although the Government continues to support a national tuberculosis control programme, implementation has stalled owing to a severe shortage of anti-tuberculosis drugs.

40. In a disturbing trend, several areas that were malaria-free before the civil war have become endemic, putting thousands of Tajiks at risk each year. Although the total number of new cases of malaria decreased by 30 per cent during the period, outbreaks are expected during the summer season in Kurgan-Tyube and other low-lying flood plains. During the first half of 1999, at least six outbreaks of typhus occurred, including one in Kulyab in early July 1999 that resulted in 14 deaths.

41. Immunization rates were high during the reporting period, although coverage was more limited in areas suffering persistent insecurity. During 1998, coverage for BCG, the anti-tuberculosis vaccine, was 98 per cent for children between zero and one. Coverage for the diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine was 94 per cent, for poliomyelitis 95 per cent and for measles 94 per cent. Owing to difficulties in maintaining the cold chain, coverage rates dropped during the first quarters of 1999. Although BCG and measles coverage continued to be high, at 98 per cent, both DPT and polio dropped to 79 per cent. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) continued to support the Ministry of Health through the provision of vaccines and training. One "mopping-up" campaign for poliomyelitis was conducted in October and November 1998.

42. As in previous years, most international assistance focused on provision of essential drugs and rehabilitation of destroyed or dilapidated buildings. Several agencies, including WHO and UNICEF, were involved in the control of epidemic diseases. The United Nations Population Fund continued its support to the reproductive health sector through technical assistance, equipment and contraceptives. Several agencies also supported health education, although communities affected by insecurity received only minimal support. Despite the alarming state of mental health facilities, only one non-governmental organization was active in the area.

43. Humanitarian agencies continued to debate the merits of providing free medicines. In some communities, humanitarian agencies account for 40 per cent of all drug supplies. Without that assistance, morbidity and mortality rates would almost certainly be higher. Concerned about sustainability, agencies are increasingly adopting more cost-recovery schemes aimed at lessening dependency on international assistance. It is expected that that trend will continue during the second half of 1999.

H. Water and sanitation

44. Central water systems continued to deteriorate during the period, increasing the level of secondary contamination and putting large segments of people at risk of developing diarrhoeal diseases. The situation was particularly acute in rural areas, where many local authorities were prevented from maintaining piped water systems by near bankruptcy. Less than 40 per cent of rural communities currently have functioning water systems, forcing hundreds of thousands of Tajiks to use unprotected sources. A recent survey found that 60-65 per cent of rural schools relied on unsafe water sources, raising serious questions about the short- and medium-term health status of children. Another survey found that 17.5 per cent of all drinking water samples failed to meet bacteriological standards, which is of particular concern to public health professionals.

45. Less than 17 per cent of Tajikistan's population has access to a centralized sewerage system, while in rural areas as little as 2 per cent of the population uses piped facilities. Despite efforts by international agencies to improve and build basic facilities, pit and pumped latrines remain in poor condition. A recent survey in southern Tajikistan, for example, found that 60-94 per cent of school latrines required repair.

46. During the reporting period, agencies continued to rehabilitate water systems. The UNDP/UNOPS two-year renovation project of Kulyab's sewerage system entered its second phase. That major initiative, which involves rehabilitation of the city's piped system, water channels and purification plant, will be completed in August 1999. In addition to bringing safe water to more than 65,000 beneficiaries, the overhaul will also reduce outbreaks of malaria and typhus in this endemic area.

47. UNICEF and non-governmental organizations also continue to repair handpumps and to provide sand filters,

helping communities to curb the spread of water-borne diseases. As part of ongoing efforts to improve hygiene awareness, UNICEF has developed a primary school textbook, published in both Russian and Tajik, for incorporation into the state curriculum. UNICEF plans to distribute additional booklets, introduced into Khatlon primary schools in October 1998, to schools throughout the country in time for the 1999 school year. Although some agencies are active in hygiene training and latrine construction, the area remains one of the most poorly funded. Substantial donor support is needed in order to combat the root causes of water-borne diseases by improving access to safe drinking water.

I. Education

48. The downward trend in school enrolment persisted during the reporting period, in particular in rural areas, where generalized destitution forced many children into work. Continuing a trend begun after the civil war, enrolment of girls is declining at a faster rate than that of boys. In areas where traditional values have re-emerged, girls are being encouraged to leave school at the end of primary classes. Officials estimate that approximately 20 per cent of boys and 25 per cent of girls do not currently attend school.

49. Owing to lack of resources, conditions inside schools have continued to deteriorate during the past 12 months. Although UNICEF was able to provide education kits benefiting 20,000 students, severe shortages of textbooks and other materials affected schools throughout the country. Officials report that the majority of schools in the hard-hit Karategin Valley have no teaching materials and are forced to rely on verbal methods of learning. In many areas, schools were closed during the winter months owing to lack of heating. As in previous years, teachers receive only minimal salaries and in a number of districts have not been paid for several months.

50. As part of a major initiative to improve the quality and quantity of educational materials, UNICEF will be printing nine textbooks to be used for children in grades 1-4. By the end of the reporting period, UNICEF had printed two of the nine textbooks. In the coming months, UNICEF plans on distributing enough copies to cover 30-35 per cent of needs for this age group.

51. Altogether, eight agencies, including WFP, continued their work in the sector during the period, providing materials, training and school feeding programmes. Despite their efforts, generalized impoverishment combined with the lack of government funding made progress negligible. If underfunding continues, Tajikistan is likely to be one of the first countries where widespread illiteracy re-emerges after having been virtually eliminated.

J. Child protection

52. Although no official statistics exist, authorities estimate that the number of street children in Tajikistan's main cities probably declined during the reporting period. With unemployment near 30 per cent, however, thousands of children continue to act as breadwinners for destitute families. Although some children are drawn into criminal activities, most earn money as porters, cleaners and food workers. Incidents of abandonment, confined mostly to members of the Russian minority, who have only limited social networks, are reportedly on the rise. As in previous years, the juvenile justice system remained in crisis. Children continued to be incarcerated with adults. In violation of Tajikistan's own laws, no juvenile courts are sitting at present.

53. In a positive development, Tajikistan, which signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child (resolution 44/25, annex) immediately after independence in 1991, submitted a report to the United Nations outlining the steps it had taken in pursuance of the Convention. The report concluded that extreme poverty threatened the basic rights of Tajik children to education, health care and food. It also warned that increasing numbers of children had no legal status because of the failure of parents to register births.

54. Although a few agencies continue to work in the sector, providing assistance to street children and orphans, United Nations agencies recognize that more substantial interventions are necessary in order to ensure the safety and well-being of children. Under the leadership of UNICEF, United Nations agencies intend to focus on protection issues in the coming months. Plans are being prepared to emulate some of the innovative work undertaken by UNHCR in Tajikistan in the field of child protection. During the reporting period, UNHCR continued its special literacy programmes aimed at non-reading children and its training in humanitarian and human rights law for military personnel and members of the police and judicial systems.

K. Rehabilitation

55. By the end of the reporting period, UNDP/UNOPS had implemented more than 200 rehabilitation projects in war-

affected areas throughout the country. Working in 21 districts and directly benefiting more than 1.7 million people, UNDP/UNOPS aims to rehabilitate infrastructure, promote self-sufficiency and reinvigorate civil society on the basis of priorities set by communities. During two years of programme implementation, 31 schools, 70 medical facilities, 17 water systems and 9 irrigation pump stations have been rehabilitated. Four women's centres have been established, 4 bridges reconstructed and 20 electricity supply systems rehabilitated. In addition, more than 15,000 hectares have been put into production and 176 kilometres of irrigation channels cleaned. A total of 7,000 temporary and 500 permanent jobs have been created, often in areas suffering high rates of unemployment.

56. Committed to helping ex-combatants integrate into society, UNDP/UNOPS developed a special programme of labour-intensive projects for implementation in areas with high concentrations of former fighters, including the Karategin Valley. Following the killing of the four UNMOT staff, the programme was suspended. With the lifting of restrictions on United Nations personnel in mid-June, UNDP/UNOPS was able to reopen its office in Garm and to begin immediate implementation of more than 50 projects in four Karategin districts. Darband was the only area where UNDP/UNOPS was unable to restart its programme because of persistent insecurity.

57. Other agencies continue to support rehabilitation, including WFP, which uses its food-for-work programme to repair roads and bridges, clean canals and refurbish community buildings in war-affected areas. Although the massive shelter programme for the Khatlon region was nearly complete at the beginning of the period, several non-governmental organizations continue to construct homes and to provide roofs for returnees and internally displaced persons. Owing to the insecurity, only limited rebuilding has occurred in the Karategin Valley, despite widespread destruction during the civil war. Plans are under way to launch a substantial rebuilding programme in the Valley, in particular in Tavildara, where an estimated 40 per cent of houses are either fully or partially destroyed.

IV. Assistance provided by Member States

58. In addition to the activities listed above, Member States have provided the following information on assistance to Tajikistan pursuant to resolution 53/1 K.

59. In 1998, the Government of Finland contributed 4 million markkaa (FIM) for assistance programmes to Tajikistan. In 1999, Finland again contributed FIM 4 million for assistance to Tajikistan, of which FIM 2 million was administered through UNICEF and FIM 2 million through the Finnish Red Cross and ICRC.

60. In 1998, the Government of Germany contributed 300,000 deutsche mark (DM) to food security programmes, DM 1,244,000 to food-for-work programmes, DM 1,350,000 for food deliveries channelled through the German relief organization World Hunger and DM 517,445 to humanitarian emergency aid. In 1999, the Government of Germany provided DM 1,800,000 to Food Security Programmes, DM 1,033,000 to food-for-work programmes, DM 540,000 channelled through UNICEF for health measures and DM 81,000 for humanitarian mine-sweeping.

61. The Government of India provided medicines valued at 4.2 million Indian rupees (Rs) in 1992 and at Rs 5 million in 1995. In 1998, the Government assisted Tajikistan with medicines and baby food in the amount of Rs 7.5 million.

62. The United States of America provided $25,000 for emergency relief activities for disaster victims of floods in Tajikistan in 1998.

V. Concluding observations

63. Despite progress in both the peace process and economic reform and improvements in security, significant humanitarian needs continue to exist throughout Tajikistan. Two years after the end of the civil war, hundreds of thousands of Tajiks continue to rely on international assistance to meet their basic needs. Although agencies providing emergency aid actively promote self-sufficiency, the level of need is so great that it would be premature at the present stage to halt relief assistance.

64. As part of ongoing efforts to support the peace process, the United Nations envisages the need to maintain humanitarian operations until the 1997 General Agreement is fully implemented. After parliamentary elections, tentatively scheduled for the first half of 2000, the United Nations would re-evaluate the humanitarian assistance activities with a view to addressing longer-term developmental issues. In the meantime, humanitarian programmes will continue to serve as a bridge, helping at-risk populations to meet their basic needs while conditions are being laid for the transition to democracy and a market economy. The strong commitment of United Nations agencies to participatory approaches would also continue in

recognition that Tajikistan's future development depends upon the ability of communities, rather than state structures, to provide essential services and sustain populations.

65. In certain areas where conditions are stable, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations are engaged in rehabilitation projects aimed at revitalizing communities and promoting self-sufficiency. That process is expected to continue during the coming year, helping to create a sustainable environment for the country's future development.

66. As in previous periods, the bulk of international resources for Tajikistan are provided through multilateral lending institutions. In comparison, the amount of funding available for relief assistance remains limited. Given this disparity, ensuring that humanitarian programmes are linked to the broader aims of the funding institutions remains an ongoing concern of United Nations agencies. The link between the United Nations and lending institutions is already strong, with two institutions using United Nations agencies as implementing partners. Special attention will continue to be given to the humanitarian implications of adjustment programmes during the United Nations dialogue with those important institutions.

67. The major challenge facing Tajikistan is full implementation of the General Agreement under conditions of social stability. The most serious obstacle to implementation continues to be the impoverishment and marginalization of key social constituencies. Although some parts of the economy are slowly regenerating, unfavourable terms of trade, loss of remittances and lack of foreign investment hinder full recovery. Until the economy is able to support the Tajik population and the peace process has been fully consolidated, humanitarian operations will remain a critical factor in ensuring stability in Tajikistan.

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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Emergency assistance to the Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 13 of resolution 53/1 O of 17 December 1998, in which the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to mobilize and coordinate resources and support for Operation Lifeline Sudan and to report on the emergency situation in the affected areas and the recovery, rehabilitation and development of the country to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. It reviews the current situation in the Sudan, detailing humanitarian assistance provided by the United Nations and its partners over the period August 1998 to July 1999.

II. Current situation in the Sudan

2. Southern Sudan faced its most serious crisis in 10 years during the second half of 1998. An unknown number of people died during the severe hunger that gripped the region. Although the situation eventually stabilized, with death rates and malnutrition declining dramatically after mid-August 1998, Bahr Al Ghazal remained an extremely fragile region at year-end. Hundreds of thousands of Sudanese civilians were dependent upon emergency assistance for their survival and recovery.

3. The humanitarian crisis in southern Sudan reached its peak in July and August 1998. Some of the highest malnutrition rates were recorded in Wau and Ajiep. In early July, the death rate in Ajiep was 18 people for every 10,000; 10 days later, the rate quadrupled, to nearly 70 per 10,000. The rate among children under five years went from below 32 per 10,000 to 133 per 10,000. Global malnutrition rates for children under five in Bahr Al Ghazal were at 63 per cent.

4. In late August and September 1998, Sudan experienced the worst flooding in several decades. In the Operation Lifeline Sudan southern sector, Bor county was the hardest hit area, with an estimated 70,000 people affected, including 10,000 who were displaced by unprecedented high river levels and heavy rains. In some areas up to 70 per cent of summer crops were destroyed, thus seriously undermining the food security of local populations.

5. In recognition of the magnitude of the problem, the Government of the Sudan offered a comprehensive ceasefire which would allow for improved humanitarian access to the most affected areas of southern Sudan. The Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) reciprocated with its own humanitarian ceasefire on 15 July 1998. The ceasefire covered only the Bahr Al Ghazal region and was initially for the three-month period. This ceasefire, which has since been renewed every three months, was an essential precondition for the successful interventions of the Operation Lifeline Sudan.

6. Given the continuing acute emergency requirements in the Bahr Al Ghazal region, both parties agreed, at the May 1999 meeting in Oslo of the Technical Committee on Humanitarian Assistance, on the need for an extension of the humanitarian ceasefire that was due to expire on 15 July. The Government reconfirmed its position in favour of a comprehensive ceasefire for all southern states and its commitment to the existing ceasefire until the next round of the peace negotiations mediated by the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development. The SPLM endorsed a ceasefire extension for the three areas of acute emergency requirements (Bahr Al Ghazal, Unity state/western Upper Nile region and Jonglei state/central Upper Nile) up to mid-October and for as long as the humanitarian situation required.

7. While the humanitarian situation in Bahr Al Ghazal improved considerably over the course of the present year, populations will remain vulnerable and dependent on relief assistance until the next harvest, due in September/October. A United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) nutrition survey, conducted in April and May, confirmed that overall nutritional standards in Bahr Al Ghazal had improved, but from a very low initial level: the average global malnutrition rate, in fact, was 22 per cent. In some locations, however, child malnutrition remained very high. In Aweil East county, for example, global malnutrition rates in some pockets were as high as 44 per cent. Displacement caused by insecurity was believed to be the major contributing factor.

8. The amount of food being locally redistributed after an initial distribution to vulnerable households continued to be a matter of concern to the World Food Programme (WFP). According to recent monitoring information, beneficiaries in the southern sector redistributed food to other less vulnerable members of the community who were not targeted to receive WFP food assistance. It was estimated that redistribution accounted for 30-35 per cent of the food rations received. A further 15-20 per cent was shared with neighbours and relatives, leaving targeted beneficiaries with some 45-55 per cent of the food received. Apart from regular suspensions of distribution when diversions were confirmed, one of the planned measures to deal with the problem is to tailor distributions in a way that eliminates stated needs for redistribution (i.e. community sharing, between those who received food aid and those who did not). In the northern sector, post distribution monitoring

findings indicated that between 90 and 95 per cent of WFP food was consumed by beneficiaries; about 5 per cent was exchanged for other commodities (such as soap, salt, meat) which were not part of WFP food aid rations; and some 5 per cent was shared with relatives who did not receive WFP food aid. Incidents of food theft and loss of ration cards were also periodically reported.

9. In Upper Nile humanitarian conditions were perceived to be deteriorating. Prolonged insecurity made the area difficult for Operation Lifeline Sudan to reach. Escalating fighting in Kassala, Red Sea Hills and Blue Nile states, as well as insecurity in South Kordofan, Upper Nile, Unity, Jonglei and parts of Equatoria, also hampered the implementation of OLS-planned relief activities. The presence of landmines in several areas impeded food delivery and distribution. In addition, increased hostilities in areas bordering north-western Bahr Al Ghazal and South Darfur displaced hundreds of people to camps for internally displaced persons (IDP) in Ed Daien, in South Kordofan state.

10. Raids by the Murahaleen militias in the first half of 1999 added to the fragile humanitarian situation in southern Sudan. The raids led to a number of deaths, theft of livestock and the abduction of women and children. UNICEF has publicly condemned the practice of abduction and developed a framework with the parties to the conflict to address the current situation and its underlying root causes.

11. In early May 1998, the Government gave assurances to the Secretary-General for the United Nations to conduct a humanitarian assessment mission to areas held by SPLM/A in the Nuba Mountains (South Kordofan state). After a series of delays, largely for security reasons, the Government gave its consent on 22 May 1998 for the mission to proceed and provided the United Nations delegation with firm dates for the proposed assessment mission. It was undertaken between 20 and 30 June. Both the Government and SPLM declared a four-day ceasefire to enable the mission to carry out its programme in the area. The mission took place from 21 to 24 June. The United Nations team, made up of staff members from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNICEF, WFP and a United Nations security officer, visited five villages controlled by SPLA to assess the humanitarian needs of vulnerable civilian populations in the area.

12. Bahr Al Ghazal and the lakes and western equatoria regions received heavy rains in May 1999, during the critical planting season. Pasture conditions were reportedly good in most regions, especially in those areas that had experienced flooding last year.

13. Reconciliation and peace-building between the Dinka and Nuer communities took place during this year, facilitated by the New Sudan Council of Churches. In February and March 1999, the Dinka/Nuer West Bank Peace and Reconciliation Conference was held at Wunlit (Bahr Al Ghazal).

14. The Bahr Al Ghazal Conference, organized by the UNICEF/OLS capacity-building section, was held in Mapel from 29 to 31 May. It brought together all non-governmental organizations working in Bahr Al Ghazal, OLS, Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association (SRRA) representatives, leaders of women's groups, youth groups and various members of SPLM. The main aims of the conference were to initiate frank and open dialogue between all concerned parties regarding the famine of 1998 and to discuss lessons learned from last year's experience.

15. Following the epidemic outbreak of meningitis in the OLS northern sector in December 1998, a consolidated inter-agency appeal was launched to which various donors contributed approximately US$ 5,836,888. These donations were used to procure 14.3 million doses of vaccines and 270,000 vials of oily chloramphenicol, with the corresponding amounts of injection materials.

16. By early June 1999, donor contributions and pledges to WFP Sudan through the 1999 United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal amounted to 78,206 tons of food valued at $89.7 million. The contributions represented 63 per cent of the total net requirements indicated in the 1999 Appeal. Reprogramming of internal funds from WFP and untied funds from other donors increased total contributions towards the Appeal to 87,467 tons of food, representing 70 per cent of total net food requirements for 1999. As to the overall Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Sudan, by mid-July total pledges amounted to $167.7 million, out of $204.2 million solicited by the mid-term review completed in July (81.8 per cent of needs covered).

III. Emergency operations and Operation Lifeline Sudan

A. General

17. During the reporting period, OLS remained the only viable instrument for humanitarian policy in the Sudan with both donor support and a commitment from the Government and SPLM. OLS concentrated on expanding access to all war-affected populations and providing life-saving food and

non-food emergency assistance. The agencies working under the umbrella of OLS continued to explore ways of providing more emergency aid to populations in need.

18. As a result of the 1998 famine, OLS refocused its programmes on emergency interventions. As part of ongoing efforts to improve the Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal, the 1999 Appeal included for the first time a core programme strategy which prioritizes inputs on the basis of a clear differentiation between acute areas, threshold areas and chronic emergency areas. In the past, the OLS programme approach had aimed at strengthening the resiliency of populations, whether they lived in acute, threshold or chronic emergency areas.

19. During 1998, OLS mounted the most complex set of interventions in its 10-year history. At the height of the crisis, WFP was delivering an average of 15,000 tons of food per month to an estimated 1 million beneficiaries using a combination of road, river and air corridors. OLS agencies provided supplementary and therapeutic feeding to more than 100,000 people and conducted a major measles and polio vaccination campaign that successfully prevented outbreaks of those diseases.

20. By late September, due to the massive efforts of United Nations agencies and partner non-governmental organizations in the consortium, the humanitarian situation in the southern sector had eased considerably. Daily mortality rates declined from 63 per 10,000 in July to 3 per 10,000 in September, for a total of 48,000 beneficiaries. Malnutrition rates dropped significantly as well, from over 50 per cent in May-June 1998 to less than 30 per cent at the end of the year. However, the condition of many people remained fragile and vulnerable due to renewed insecurity.

21. Ensuring that relief assistance reached the most vulnerable remained a considerable challenge to Operation Lifeline Sudan during the reporting period. Once the relief operation had scaled up in June 1998, it became apparent that some people did not appear to benefit from food and other relief assistance. A joint OLS/SRRA/SPLM task force was assembled in August 1998 to investigate whether the most vulnerable people were receiving the relief they were entitled to. The task force concluded that some food and other relief items were being redistributed by powerful local figures and some were being taxed; it also made several recommendations to improve the existing process of food distribution in Bahr Al Ghazal. Subsequent major analyses by OLS and WFP also point to failures in the food aid distribution system vis-à-vis reaching the most vulnerable.

22. Recommendations emerging from these evaluations were acted upon, and the situation improved considerably by the end of last year. However, the problem had to be constantly addressed by both OLS and SRRA throughout the current year. Agreement was reached between OLS and the counterparts on an improved system for distribution of relief items through joint relief and rehabilitation committees at the community level.

23. During the reporting period, UNICEF, in collaboration with non-governmental organizations, focused on the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI); primary health care, sanitation, hygiene and disease outbreak activities; advanced planning for procurement and pre-positioning of seeds for distribution in the year 2000; emergency preparedness; education and children in especially difficult circumstances; and field and air operations. Gender-specific activities requested in the Appeal remain unfunded in both the northern and southern sectors.

24. In view of its recent strategic refocus on human rights and peace-building, UNICEF/Operation Lifeline Sudan is introducing these elements as new priority components within the core programme strategy. These new components will build on existing rights-based programmes such as the Humanitarian Principles and Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances/Child Protection Strategy. This framework will form the basis for all UNICEF activities.

25. By the end of May 1999, WFP had delivered a cumulative total for the year of 57,090 tons of food. Of that amount, the northern sector delivered a total of 17,190 tons, while the southern sector delivered a total of 39,900 tons. The deliveries represented 85 per cent of planned requirements for the period. WFP provided food aid to a monthly average of 1,177,600 beneficiaries (281,100 in the northern sector and 896,500 in the southern sector) during the first five months of the year. However, insecurity in Upper Nile, Unity, Jonglei and Equatoria prevented WFP from reaching hundreds of thousands of needy persons.

26. The United Nations Humanitarian Coordination Unit (UNHCU) launched one of the United Nations first integrated assistance and protection programmes for IDPs in 1997. The programme, which included a humanitarian principles component, has been used to define the framework for humanitarian operations in government areas. UNHCU continued its role of inter-agency coordination, working with United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations to ensure the timely and effective provision of relief services to beneficiaries in government areas, in particular to IDPs.

27. In early 1999 a task force for the protection of IDPs, comprising the United Nations, international

non-governmental organizations and donor representatives, was formed in recognition of the vital need for assistance to this group. The task force will examine, *inter alia*, questions pertaining to coordination with Government of Sudan ministries as well as protection concerns arising from current urban planning policies. UNHCU also organized emergency preparedness planning sessions to establish the scope and status of current and projected relief interventions.

28. Operation Lifeline Sudan (northern and southern sectors) continued to be coordinated by the United Nations Coordinator for Emergency and Relief Operations in the Sudan (UNCERO), with assistance from UNHCU in Khartoum. As United Nations Resident Coordinator and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) resident representative, UNCERO also discharged responsibilities as designated official for all United Nations security operations in the northern sector of Operation Lifeline Sudan as well as in additional areas of the Sudan that do not fall under the Operation Lifeline Sudan umbrella.

29. Under the leadership of the Operation Lifeline Sudan southern sector coordinator and chief of operations, UNICEF continued its role as lead agency for the Operation Lifeline Sudan southern sector, with the responsibility of coordination in areas served out of Lokichokio. Specific responsibilities included managing the Lokichokio forward staging base, managing the airbridge and providing security coverage for all Operation Lifeline Sudan personnel working inside southern Sudan.

B. Political and military developments affecting humanitarian relief efforts

30. In the void created by the lack of any tangible political progress towards a negotiated settlement to the civil war, military confrontation has continued between the Government of Sudan and SPLA and their allied forces. Hostilities became particularly intense in recent months in the Unity state/western Upper Nile region and adjacent areas as the protagonists vied for control of oil-rich areas and other key geographical zones.

31. This resurgence of hostilities generated a rash of security-related incidents that impeded the implementation of Operation Lifeline Sudan programmes. In the Bahr Al Ghazal region, for example, while the security situation has been generally stable since the humanitarian ceasefire went into effect in mid-July 1998, lately there have been serious incidents that have interrupted humanitarian operations.

32. Ongoing conflict between various southern factions aligned with the Government in the Unity state/western Upper Nile region caused Operation Lifeline Sudan humanitarian operations in that region to come to a virtual standstill. In May 1999, fighting in the region intensified when elements of the South Sudan Independence Movement/Army (SSIM/A) forces, formerly aligned with the Government through the April 1997 peace agreement, turned on governmental troops in the area.

33. The western Upper Nile area was insecure for much of the reporting period, with continued conflict between the SSIM/A and the South Sudan Unity Movement (SSUM). In early May, fighting over control of the oil fields in Duar and Bentiu broke out, which resulted in the takeover of a large area by SSUM. The area remains contested. The fighting halted all relief activities, which had already suffered constant disruption since May 1998. This seriously affected the ability of Operation Lifeline Sudan to respond to outbreaks of cholera in the area.

34. Between July and December 1998, a total of six evacuations of Operation Lifeline Sudan staff occurred. From January to June 1999, the number of evacuations escalated to 50. This figure is significantly higher than for the same period last year. Non-governmental organizations and United Nations staff on the ground reported over 55 incidents of bombardment to Operation Lifeline Sudan security. The majority of these incidents (approximately 50) occurred in Eastern Equatoria, which remained a repeated target for bombardment by the Government since the attempted takeover of the government garrison town of Torit by SPLA in September 1998. Yei, Kajo-Keji, Ikotos, Labone, Chukudum and Narus were bombed several times. Hospitals at Kajo-Keji and Yei, run by Médecins sans frontieres/Switzerland and Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) respectively, were hit during the bombardments.

35. In Eastern Equatoria tribal clashes resulted in deteriorating security as SPLA came into conflict with the local Didinga tribe. The town of Chukudum was the scene of violent fighting and all Operation Lifeline Sudan non-governmental organization pulled out, including the Diocese of Torit, a Sudanese organization that had worked in the area for many years. Local people fled the area. Security on the roads from the Kenyan border to Chukudum posed serious problems, as WFP food convoys were raided. One stretch of road near the Kenyan border was closed for more than two months because of banditry.

36. Bahr Al Ghazal also suffered from two incidents of bombardment. Its eastern side was again the site of interfactional fighting, while the Murahaleen militias

continued to raid communities, villages and markets. The passing of the governmental supply trains through Bahr Al Ghazal to Aweil and Wau was accompanied by violent raids into adjacent areas, causing the evacuation of Operation Lifeline Sudan staff and the displacement of the population. Each warring party claimed that the other had violated the ceasefire.

Other security incidents affecting relief personnel

37. Security-related incidents continued to jeopardize the safety and security of Operation Lifeline Sudan humanitarian staff. In the early morning of 18 May 1999, in Adok, Unity State/western Upper Nile region, a WFP barge convoy operating in the Nile River basin came under armed attack. One person was killed and three were wounded, including two WFP staff members (one local, one international). This led to the suspension of all barge operations in the Nile River basin, pending a security assessment along the river corridors. WFP had made significant efforts to increase food delivery by river barge since the beginning of the year in order to reach greater numbers of beneficiaries (over 640,000) and to reduce transport costs. The Sudanese Government and SPLM delegations to the May meeting of the Technical Committee on Humanitarian Assistance committed themselves to taking all necessary measures to guarantee the safety and security of Operation Lifeline Sudan personnel and property in all geographical areas under their respective control and to ensure that those who were allied with them acted accordingly.

38. In March 1999, one Sudanese Red Crescent worker and three Sudanese government officials who had accompanied an International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) team in southern Sudan were abducted and then killed while in detention by the SPLM/A.

39. Bombings by governmental aircrafts occurred in two locations in Bahr Al Ghazal. In the first, in Akak on 16 May, a girl was killed when 24 cluster bombs were dropped next to a WFP drop zone. On 17 May, bombs were dropped on Nyamlel, another location covered by the ceasefire and where Operation Lifeline Sudan staff were present.

40. There were reported incidents of military interference by security forces with humanitarian operations and personnel. In June of this year, a Norwegian Church Aid staff member was detained in his compound in Ikotos by SPLM/A for holding empty shell casings. The Operation Lifeline Sudan security officer who tried to intervene on his behalf was also detained. The situation in Ikotos was subsequently resolved through the intervention of the UNICEF/Operation Lifeline Sudan Humanitarian Principles programme and SPLM security.

C. Access

Flight clearances

41. Following the flight ban over Bahr Al Ghazal during the months of February and March 1998, access by air over southern Sudan was generally good for the remainder of 1998 and the beginning of 1999, except in eastern Equatoria and parts of Jonglei and Upper Nile, where there were a number of denials. Operation Lifeline Sudan access to all SPLM-controlled locations in Eastern Equatoria was denied by the Government throughout 1999, while clearance was given to Government-held locations in the same region. Due to the availability of alternative access routes by road, the impact of these restrictions was not severe. However, with the commencement of the rainy season, causing the roads to become impassable, there may be a significant impact on relief activities in the region by the third quarter of 1999. Access to most SPLM-controlled locations in Bor county (Jonglei state) has been denied in 1999, as was the case throughout 1998. Also denied were a number of locations in Upper Nile. This significantly hampered WFP interventions to assist populations severely affected by extensive flooding in the region.

Operating environment

42. Operation Lifeline Sudan agencies were constrained by the increasing number of violations of the Agreement on Ground Rules and lack of priority given to humanitarian principles by people in positions of authority on the ground. On the SPLM side, attention focused on encouraging SRRA to implement the recommendations of the Joint Operation Lifeline Sudan/SPLM/SRRA Task Force on Vulnerability and Targeting to promote adherence to the right of war-affected people to receive humanitarian assistance. Other issues included adopting a mutually acceptable text of the proposed Memorandum of Understanding between the SRRA and non-governmental organizations. Additionally, Operation Lifeline Sudan experienced problems over efforts by local SPLM/SRRA officials to attempt to impose taxation on humanitarian relief materials, services, personnel and vehicles. While the official position of SRRA remained that such taxes should not be imposed, ensuring that local officials in SPLM-held areas respect that position has proved difficult.

43. Progress in implementing the Security Protocol signed at the Technical Committee meeting in Rome has been very slow, since major problems persist with regard to communications and navigational equipment. With the exception of Wau, there have been no changes to the communications status quo since the signing of the Protocol. This issue is very important to the future of the cross-line operations agreed to at the Oslo round of meetings of the Technical Committee. Affected by problems relating to the importation and use of communications equipment are the UNICEF/Khartoum headquarters and its 12 field offices and the WFP/Khartoum headquarters and its 11 sub-offices. Various bureaucratic hurdles continue to impede efforts to obtain security clearance to transport radios from Khartoum to the field. Security concerns, field communications constraints and import restrictions also adversely affect the INGO operational environment.

Road access

44. Road transport from the southern sector bases of Lokichokio and Koboko (Uganda) was suspended in May due to a combination of factors. Insecurity in Eastern Equatoria, which led to the looting of food from WFP-contracted trucks, cut off road access to Bahr Al Ghazal, where WFP was delivering pre-positioned stock at Mapel. Furthermore, transportation of food commodities from Port Sudan by road has been unduly delayed since April 1999 by insecurity and bureaucratic delays in the release of WFP shipments. This has resulted in temporary shortages of food commodities.

D. Internally displaced persons

45. Internal displacements due to insecurity continued throughout the reporting period. No significant return of IDPs was observed. The displacement caused by the SPLA attack in Bahr Al Ghazal stabilized, thanks to the consistent and effective emergency services provided by the assistance community to IDPs in affected areas. Over 50,000 beneficiaries, mostly IDPs, are being provided food aid in Wau.

46. Major emergencies affecting IDPs during the reporting period included floods that destroyed over 1,000 homes and damaged over 6,000 in Khartoum alone. Continuous relocating of the internally displaced as a result of demolitions in the greater Khartoum area resulted in a need for emergency assistance. Some 50,000 IDPs were reportedly relocated from squatter areas and the Jabel Awalia IDP camp to new settlement sites in greater Khartoum. Further relocations of IDPs in greater Khartoum are expected during the second half of the current year.

47. As part of the UNHCU-integrated IDP assistance and protection programme, assistance coordination forums were established in field locations to facilitate a coordinated approach to addressing the emergency needs of IDPs. Efforts are currently under way to make, to the extent possible, appropriate protection elements an integral part of assistance programmes, through multisectoral, multi-agency common programmes for IDPs. Special emphasis is being put on IDP self-reliance during displacement within a safe and sustainable environment and on increased IDP community participation. Emergency preparedness plans for the different disaster-prone IDP locations are being finalized. Such plans will seek to minimize the hardships caused by emergencies. Systematic needs assessments of the most vulnerable IDP communities in Operation Lifeline Sudan northern sector areas continue and are backed by relevant humanitarian interventions. UNHCU, through the IDP assistance and protection programme, started to issue updates on the IDP situation on a regular basis to enhance information-sharing on the overall situation of the IDPs in the Operation Lifeline Sudan northern sector.

E. Non-governmental organizations

48. During the reporting period, international non-governmental organizations operating in the Operation Lifeline Sudan northern sector continued to work in 16 regions and consolidated their support to displaced populations in Bahr Al Ghazal. The access issues of 1998 were substantially resolved in the case of "garrison towns", but international non-governmental organization access to new regions, such as the Blue Nile state, awaited United Nations assessments. International non-governmental organization/Operation Lifeline Sudan coordination improved through Humanitarian Aid Forum (HAF) meetings and task forces, and links with UNHCU and its IDP team assisted in the flow of information for project implementation.

49. In general, the international non-governmental organization working environment in the Operation Lifeline Sudan northern sector improved in 1998-1999. Clarifications on government policies reduced many obstructions; however, poor internal communication between bureaucracies frequently interfered with international non-governmental organization programme implementation. Adequate security coverage for international non-governmental organization humanitarian workers

continued to be an issue and was addressed through ongoing efforts to improve communication and coordination with the United Nations security system.

50. Northern sector international non-governmental organizations continued to coordinate with one another through the INGO Forum, which comprised 18 members at the end of the reporting period. Several of the organizations were implementing partners of WFP, UNICEF and other United Nations agencies for programmes involving United Nations inputs such as food, medicines, vaccines and water supply equipment. Other international non-governmental organization programmes in the Operation Lifeline Sudan northern sector related to environment, sanitation, shelter, rehabilitation and social development.

51. Over 40 international non-governmental organizations now operate under the Operation Lifeline Sudan in the southern sector, with a concentration in Bahr Al Ghazal (22 international non-governmental organizations); 16 of them operate in Upper Nile and 15 in Equatoria. Unfortunately, there is only a handful of additional Sudanese non-governmental organizations with an indigenous capacity. International non-governmental organizations were the main implementers of the Operation Lifeline Sudan programmes, providing financial and material resources at relatively short notice. They became active members of the Operation Lifeline Sudan emergency response teams. About 10 international non-governmental organizations have opted, for varying reasons, to operate outside of Operation Lifeline Sudan.

52. The main focus of non-governmental organizations is in the health and nutrition sector, with over 20 organisations working in that area. Household food security is the second largest sector, with about 10 non-governmental organizations involved. The water and sanitation sector comes next, followed by a few non-governmental organizations, such as Save the Children Fund-UK and World Vision International, that work on a significantly large scale in relief distribution. Only a small number of non-governmental organizations work in social development and in education.

53. Non-governmental organizations have benefited from the Operation Lifeline Sudan retreat held in April 1999. The issue of a greater strategic vision to Operation Lifeline Sudan was examined at length, as was the need to draw lessons from the ongoing relief efforts, in terms of coordination, contingency planning and other issues. The June 1999 Joint Donors' Meeting in Nairobi, to which northern and southern sector international non-governmental organizations were invited, also provided an opportunity to explore enhanced north/south coordination among international non-governmental organizations and to present a joint report to Operation Lifeline Sudan and donors. The report looked at a number of issues related to an effective emergency response, including engagement with civil bodies, local capacity-building, moving from relief to development, enhanced security and access, protection and human rights, and the necessity to intensify efforts to achieve peace.

F. Relief food assistance

54. During the 1998 crisis, WFP provided more than 112,000 tons of food to approximately 1.5 million beneficiaries, significantly improving the lives of a large segment of the needy population in the Sudan. The objective in 1999 was to build upon the achievements of 1998 by reducing mortality and malnutrition rates in Bahr Al Ghazal.

55. The annual Operation Lifeline Sudan needs assessment exercises and the FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Missions of October/November 1998 estimated that WFP would need to provide a total of 173,286 tons of emergency food to cover the needs of 2.36 million beneficiaries during 1999; 66,241 tons would be needed to assist 1,197,800 beneficiaries in the northern sector (60 per cent of whom are women), and 91,293 tons for 1,162,500 beneficiaries in the southern sector. A contingency stock of 10 per cent of these annual needs was also included in the requirements so as to give WFP the flexibility to respond quickly to the sudden onset of emergencies. WFP was able to deliver 60 per cent (33,830 tons) of its total deliveries by air from operational bases in Khartoum and El Obeid in the northern sector and from Lokichokio in the southern sector.

56. Overland deliveries accounted for 33 per cent of total deliveries (19,097 tons). Road operations were significantly increased to make use of this cheaper method of food aid transportation during the dry season. All food planned for pre-positioning in remote positions in the northern sector by road was delivered before the onset of the rainy season. In the southern sector this was achieved to a lesser degree, owing to risks of diversions and insecurity resulting in loss of stocks.

57. Barge deliveries made up 7 per cent (4,163 tons) of total distributions. With a view to increasing barge deliveries, WFP successfully negotiated the lease of additional pushers from the Sudan River Transport Cooperation, bringing the total number of serviceable pushers to four. In addition, WFP secured funding to purchase six reconditioned engines for three pushers. With these additional pushers and more efficient engines, WFP's

delivery capacity increased to 5,200 tons, up from 2,500 when only two pushers were available. During the first five months of 1999, WFP mounted three barge convoys, delivering a total of 7,414 tons of pre-positioned food stock along the Bentiu and Juba River corridors. The food was stored in WFP warehouses for distribution during the hunger gap period (May-September).

G. Non-food assistance

58. By September 1998, the humanitarian situation in the most affected areas of Bahr Al Ghazal — Wau town and Ajiep — had gone from of the acute emergency phase, in which all efforts were focused on saving lives, to the second phase, where the emphasis was on improving the quality of services and consolidating the gains made. In Wau town, the relocation of IDPs to a newly established camp on the eastern bank of the river continued, and by the end of October UNICEF had ensured the provision of safe water through the rehabilitation and installation of handpumps.

59. From the beginning of August 1998, many areas in 13 of the 26 states were hit by destructive floods and heavy rains. Some 250,000 households in about 500 villages were affected. More than 29,000 families were made homeless, and more than 200 schools and health units were severely damaged or destroyed. Flooding also caused massive destruction to public health, sanitation and agricultural infrastructures.

60. An assessment mission comprising representatives from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the World Health Organisation (WHO), UNICEF, FAO, WFP, UNDP and the Government began an appraisal of the situation on 24 October 1998. The main diseases resulting from the floods were found to be eye infections, diarrhoea, malaria and other water-borne conditions. Based on these findings, UNICEF provided essential medical supplies, vaccines, plastic sheeting, mosquito nets and water supply systems. The construction of health centres, training of health workers and the establishment of drug-revolving funds were planned as long-term projects. Over 160 schools were badly damaged and became unusable. Short-term activities included the construction of 300 temporary classrooms and the provision of basic school materials. The rehabilitation programme is being carried out by the Government, UNICEF, WHO and the local communities.

Health

61. The outbreak of a meningitis epidemic in the northern sector in December 1998 over-stretched the health services. As of 8 June 1999, 31,190 cases were reported, with 2,223 deaths (a 7.1 per cent fatality rate). A massive vaccination campaign helped to contain the epidemic. The ongoing vaccination programme has now reached 10.5 million people. While cases have been reported in the southern sector, in no location has the epidemic threshold been exceeded.

62. In March-April 1999, a cholera/watery diarrhoea outbreak of approximately 1,000 cases was announced in the southern sector areas of Unity and Jonglei states. UNICEF provided supplies, medication and support to non-governmental organizations on the ground. The outbreak was contained with a mortality rate of 3 per cent. In the northern sector, with Malakal as the epicentre, 3,654 cases of watery diarrhoea, with an 8.2 per cent mortality rate, were reported. The outbreak was successfully contained.

63. In February and March 1999, the first and second rounds of national immunization days for the polio campaign were completed in both the northern and southern sectors. In the latter, over 1 million children were vaccinated in each round (target percentage of 100 per cent). In the northern sector, 4,074,443 children under five years out of a target population of 4,163,116 were vaccinated in the first round, and 4,692,644 out of a target population of 4,636,921 were vaccinated in the second round (target percentages of 98 per cent and 101 per cent, respectively). Vitamin A supplement was distributed to children aged between 6 and 59 months in the two sectors, and were vaccinated against measles in the northern sector and 210,000 children under five years.

64. The measles campaign launched by the UNICEF Executive Director during her July 1998 visit covered more than 95 per cent of the children under five in accessible areas of Bahr Al Ghazal. An influx of displaced persons into Aweil led to a campaign for children under five years of age which provided them with one dose of oral polio vaccine, measles vaccine and vitamin A supplement.

65. In 1998, UNICEF, WHO and non-governmental organizations investigated and responded to at least 19 other disease outbreaks. The outbreaks occurred throughout southern Sudan and involved whooping cough, acute diarrhea disease, relapsing fever, and measles. In 1999, more than 10 such outbreaks took place. UNICEF provided essential supplies and medical kits, including intravenous infusions, injection equipment and vaccines. WHO established operational bases in Lokichokio and Juba and was involved in disease control, surveillance and response

activities. An intercountry EPI support team was also established.

Nutrition

66. In late 1998 and early 1999 the nutritional status of women and children improved significantly. Programme implementation benefited from the provision of emergency health, safe water and sanitation facilities by Operation Lifeline Sudan agencies. UNICEF provided supplementary and therapeutic feeding programmes for children under five years and food supplements for pregnant and lactating women. In 1998, the Operation Lifeline Sudan northern sector established over 70 feeding centres, currently serving as referral centres for malnutrition in emergency areas. In the southern sector, UNICEF provided similar support to non-governmental organizations running supplementary and therapeutic feeding centres in 57 locations in Bahr Al Ghazal.

Household food security

67. In 1999 the seeds and tools programme reached more households than ever in the southern sector. Out of a total of 3,268 tons of seeds, 646 tons were distributed by UNICEF. The programme targeted 500,000 households, more than double last year's target. Crop production was strengthened by testing the germination rates of seeds. In the northern sector, 451 tons of seeds were distributed to 69,517 beneficiary households. Crop diversification is being supported through the swapping of local seed varieties for the northern Sudanese variety supplied by UNICEF.

68. The control of rinderpest, which devastates cattle, continued to be an important part of the programme, with increased focus on active disease surveillance. During the reporting period, approximately 1.8 million cattle in both the northern and southern sectors were vaccinated against rinderpest, and over 1,000 community-based animal health workers, including vaccinators, were supported with training, supervision and equipment. The programme, which was supported by the Pan-African Rinderpest Campaign and UNICEF, also drew significantly on the expertise and resources of non-governmental organizations.

Water and environmental sanitation

69. Over 990,000 people in the Operation Lifeline Sudan northern and southern sectors benefited from water and environmental sanitation interventions during the reporting period. In 1998, intensive training was conducted for over 60 local counterpart teams in the operation and maintenance of existing water systems in the southern sector, and 45 major feeding centres and main distribution points received adequate supplies of clean water. UNICEF worked closely with local authorities to promote awareness of hygiene and to build latrines. New hand-dug wells and drilling holes were constructed in Bahr Al Ghazal.

Emergency education

70. In the Operation Lifeline Sudan southern sector more than 2,000 teachers and school administrators were trained during the reporting period. In 1999 there was a major shift to a more stable teacher-training programme. Limited support was also offered in the provision by UNICEF of education materials, including bicycles to school supervisors, school supplies to education field offices, teacher's guides and textbook kits for 150 schools. In the northern sector, 17,650 primary school teachers have been trained at the primary-education level. The support to education in South Kordofan state over the past few years has led to an increase in enrolment levels, including that of girls. The programme also provided children throughout southern Sudan with basic learning materials and the schools with teaching materials. UNICEF also supported state teacher-training institutions, implementing jointly planned training by improving office capacities through supervision, monitoring and the provision of office supplies.

Other assistance

71. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) is implementing its programme on urban upgrading and poverty alleviation. The programme has the following objectives: to build confidence among all urban actors through the establishment of a consultation organizational framework; to increase individual and institutional capacity in alleviating poverty; to develop urban income-generating activities; to secure land tenure and ownership to disadvantaged groups in squatter areas; and to develop project management tools. Upon completion of the programme, approximately 1,200 persons from all categories of the urban poor within the project areas will have received training and acquired new development skills.

72. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is carrying out its initiative to harmonize the educational system in northern and southern Sudan and is also supporting some educational activities in the southern regions. Financial and technical support was provided in 1998 to the Wadi Dinder Biosphere Reserve and in the area of Wadi Abou Hall. Two consultancy missions to the Sudan are planned for 1999. One will deal with the development of a project to interconnect

all private and public universities in the Sudan to the Internet.

Children in especially difficult circumstances

73. Programme efforts for children in especially difficult circumstances over the past year have included psycho-social support for war-affected children, responding to the needs of the increased number of unaccompanied children in Wau, and support to boys juvenile reformatories.

74. As a result of the Bahr Al Ghazal crisis in 1998, the number of unaccompanied children increased dramatically. The Swedish international non-governmental organization Radda Barnen responded immediately, offering the training services of two consultants drawn from the Regional Resource Group in East Africa. The consultants trained relevant staff in survey methods, verification and tracing practices, and reunification or integration of the children with families. The Totto Chan Centre in Juba conducted a series of workshops on psychosocial support for children affected by war. Technical expertise was provided by Radda Barnen and the Danish Refugee Council.

75. UNICEF, in collaboration with Sudanese authorities and child-focused non-governmental organizations including Save the Children Fund-UK, reunited over 1,000 children with their families in Bahr Al Ghazal. The children were separated as a result of hunger and massive displacement in the second quarter of 1998. By mid-1998 UNICEF had initiated and coordinated emergency assistance to unaccompanied children by focusing on the provision of food, shelter and health services. UNICEF provided technical assistance as well as financial and logistical support to non-governmental organizations in the sector and deployed an emergency team of social workers trained in child care and protection issues.

76. In the first three months of 1999, over 500 child soldiers were registered and about 350 demobilized as part of a new programme on demobilization of child soldiers. Over 50 demobilized child soldiers were reunited with their families, while the rest were transferred to a transit camp for orientation and to await tracing and reunification with their families. While the children were at the feeding centres, the facilities were used as "learning centres" that provided them with some recreation and stimulation. The centres were reaching 2,000 children and expanded as more volunteers were brought on board.

77. Approximately 100 demobilized child soldiers went missing following fighting in the Upper Nile area in May-June 1999. The children were being cared for in a transit camp in Thonyir, western Upper Nile region. The camp was forced to close owing to renewed conflict and continued insecurity, and the children were evacuated on 5 May. It is feared that the missing children may have been recruited into the various armies and militias. Operation Lifeline Sudan agencies are currently investigating their disappearance.

Humanitarian principles

78. In order to increase adherence to the Operation Lifeline Sudan agreement on Ground Rules in 1999, an international Humanitarian Principles/Ground Rules officer was recruited by the Operation Lifeline Sudan southern sector Humanitarian Principles Unit and placed in Lokichokio. This appointment was seen as successful, and many international non-governmental organizations commented that Operation Lifeline Sudan was in a stronger position to provide assistance in that area. The creation of the Lokichokio-based post also increased the organizational capacity of field staff, enabling them to run more Ground Rules dissemination workshops in the field. The duration of the Ground Rules sessions in the Operation Lifeline Sudan security workshops held in Lokichokio has been increased. Recruitment is also under way to increase the number of Sudanese field officers.

79. In May 1999 a high-level conference was held in Mapel, Bahr Al Ghazal, to address the problems of food diversions and violations of the Humanitarian Principles and Operation Lifeline Sudan Ground Rules identified in the 1998 report of the Joint SPLM/SRRA/Operation Lifeline Sudan Task Force on Targeting and Vulnerability. Senior SPLM/SRRA officials again publicly acknowledged the problems of diversions in areas under SPLM control and committed themselves to taking additional measures to rectify them.

80. The landmine awareness team [illegible]eration Save Innocent Lives, participated in mine awareness activities in villages and towns in close proximity to minefields.

H. Assistance to refugees

81. During the reporting period 147,302 Eritrean and 11,889 Ethiopian camp-based refugees received basic material and protection assistance from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). An estimated 232,000 urban refugees received limited material assistance and are still covered by UNHCR's protection mandate. Arrangements to repatriate the Eritreans during the reporting period did not materialize because of recent Eritrea/Ethiopia border clashes, the prevailing state of relations between the

Governments of Sudan and Eritrea, and the unwillingness of the latter to take back its nationals.

82. After the successful voluntary repatriation of the Ethiopian refugees in June 1998, there were 11,889 refugees in the camps and an estimated 23,670 in urban areas. Consultations between the two Governments, the UNHCR regional liaison office in Addis Ababa and UNHCR headquarters continued. With regard to the possibility of invoking the cessation clause for pre-1999 Ethiopian refugees, a plan of action is being developed which includes the appropriate solution-oriented package in the form of assistance to refugee-affected areas and measures to assist former Ethiopian refugees who may wish to return to Ethiopia under the "good offices" of the High Commissioner.

83. After a residual caseload was fully integrated with the nationals, the remaining 4,400 Chadian refugees settled in El Geneina, West Darfur state, and received limited UNHCR assistance. The recent intertribal conflicts in the area have created mass displacements, affecting both the local population and the refugees. Once access to El Geneina is established, UNHCR intends to organize the voluntary repatriation of those who wish to return and to carry out limited rehabilitation of basic facilities before handing them over to the local authorities.

84. The 334 refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo — mainly women and children — who arrived in Juba in early 1997, have been receiving food and other humanitarian assistance under the Operation Lifeline Sudan umbrella. WFP provides full food rations, while UNICEF maintains water wells at the refugee site. Owing to instability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, no substantial repatriation was promoted.

85. A total of 8,865 Ugandan and Congolese refugees were estimated to be living in southern Sudan and were supported by Operation Lifeline Sudan. A small number were also living in Khartoum under Operation Lifeline Sudan assistance. A total of 43 Somali refugees in Fau-5 camp are being provided with normal UNHCR assistance. During the reporting period UNHCR organized resettlement in various countries for 489 refugees in the Sudan.

86. Significantly, UNHCR/Sudan also received some Sudanese returnees from exile. During the period July 1998-June 1999, a total of 92 Sudanese refugees, mainly from Kenya, returned home under the auspices of UNHCR.

IV. Action taken by Member States

87. In addition to the activities described above, Members States have provided the following information on action taken pursuant to General Assembly resolution 53/1 O.

88. The Government of Finland contributed humanitarian and relief assistance for the Sudan in the amount of 7 million markkaa in 1998, and in the amount of 5.8 million markkaa in 1999, of which 2 million were channelled through UNICEF and 2 million through WFP.

89. In 1998 the Government of France contributed a total of 4.6 million French francs. In addition, the French Embassy in Khartoum allocated FF 70,000 from its emergency fund for the construction of a dispensary and for equipment to be supplied to a hospital in the region of Dongola. In 1999 the Government of France contributed FF 0.4 million to WHO for its campaign against meningitis.

90. The humanitarian emergency assistance given by the Government of Germany totalled 12,169,893 deutsche mark in 1998 and DM 3,073,118 in 1999.

91. Since 1 January 1998, the Government of India has provided a total of 1 million rupees, including RS 200,000 for the supply of baby milk powder, RS 600,000 for the supply of medicines and RS 200,000 to cover the freight, handling and insurance charges for sending the above two consignments.

92. The Government of Norway reported that in 1998 contributions to the Sudan totalled 126,224,810 Norwegian kroner. In the current year, humanitarian assistance has been provided in the amount of NK 75,064,844.

93. In the fiscal year 1998, the Office for Foreign Disaster Assistance of the United States Agency for International Development contributed a total of $37,874,874, of which $64,014 was to assist victims of floods. In the fiscal year 1999, contributions have totalled $12,442,025, of which $254,325 were to assist victims of floods.

V. Concluding observations

94. Thanks to unprecedented levels of donor support, the worst effects of the 1998 humanitarian crisis were in a large part contained. This notwithstanding, it is to be remembered that the crisis itself was exacerbated by a ban on Operation Lifeline Sudan flights in an area marked by a resurgence of fighting between the parties to the conflict. While cooperation in support of Operation Lifeline Sudan subsequently improved, the initial cause of the tragedy in

which many thousands of lives were undoubtedly lost, was a breakdown in that cooperation for reasons of a non-humanitarian character.

95. This episode points to many issues, including the seemingly endless plight of no less than three successive generations of Sudanese whose lives have been affected by the longest running internal conflict on the African continent. On a purely humanitarian level, the 1998 crisis illustrates that, without the full and uninterrupted cooperation of the parties to the conflict, Operation Lifeline Sudan will be condemned to fight a perpetual uphill battle against human misery and deprivation.

96. It is imperative to emphasize once again that the underlying principles and instruments defining cooperation within Operation Lifeline Sudan must be respected. Key in this regard are the trilateral agreements of March and May 1994, the Operation Lifeline Sudan Grounds Rules and the various accords on access and on security reached within the framework of the Technical Committee on Humanitarian Assistance. In invoking the primacy of these instruments, there remains concern that, nonetheless, many beneficiaries of humanitarian aid in both sectors continue in some regards to be deprived of their basic rights and entitlements. Whether this be, for example, in the form of diversions and misuse of food aid, forced relocations of IDPs or unilateral attempts by a party to the conflict to redefine the Operation Lifeline Sudan parameters to fit its own political interests, such practices are, by all recognized norms of humanitarian action, not acceptable.

97. In many, if not all, instances, since mid-1998 the parties to the conflict have demonstrated a willingness to examine openly the related issues. For this reason, progress in securing agreements with the United Nations at the two successive meetings of the Technical Committee has been significant. The application of the accords reached in November 1998 and May 1999, however, requires considerable attention and improvement. This is particularly the case in view of the rash of security related incidents, which resulted in the killing of or serious injury to Operation Lifeline Sudan staff. More specifically, continued humanitarian action in areas of crisis conditions in southern Sudan must benefit from further extensions and a geographical broadening of the humanitarian ceasefire applicable in Bahr Al Ghazal. Renewed armed confrontation since April imperils this objective.

98. The United Nations humanitarian assessment mission to the SPLM-controlled areas of the Nuba Mountains finally took place in late June 1999. The mission was conducted with the full cooperation of the Government of Sudan as well as SPLM. In order to build upon this positive achievement, follow-up action will be required. This will include final determination of food aid requirements and overall relief supply delivery modalities, in the hope of initiating a full-fledged United Nations programme in both government and SPLM-controlled areas of the Nuba Mountains.